

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

**The William E. Doar, Jr. Public Charter School
for the Performing Arts**

**705 Edgewood St. NE
Washington, DC 20017**

The William E. Doar, Jr. Public Charter School for the Performing Arts 2012-2013

A. Mission Statement: *The William E. Doar Jr. Public Charter School for the Performing Arts will foster a safe, creative, enjoyable, and culturally sensitive learning environment for all students with the goal of providing a college preparatory curriculum in both academics and the performing arts to produce the next generation of leaders for America and the global society.*

The WEDJ Commitment

1. We are committed to the **SAFETY** of all members of the William E. Doar, Jr. Public Charter School for the Performing Arts community.
2. We are committed to **CREATIVITY**.
3. We are committed to preparing all members of the community to be successful in their **ACADEMIC PURSUITS, COLLEGE and LIFE**.
4. We are committed to **COMMUNICATING RESPECTFULLY**.
5. We are committed to **HONESTY**.
6. We are committed to creating a next generation of **GLOBAL LEADERS** through the **ARTS**.

B. School Programs

1. In 2012-2013, WEDJ served PreK through 8th grade.
2. Curriculum design and instructional approach:

WEDJ PCS is unique among DC's charter and public schools because of its focus on the performing arts. WEDJ develops scholars, artists, and leaders by combining rigorous academics with high-quality music, dance, visual arts and theatre instruction aimed at developing global arts leaders. In 2011-2012, WEDJ used the America's Choice curriculum. After weak test scores indicated a change in approach would be beneficial, The school continued its mission during the course of the 2012-2013 school year, but shifted to a new customized curriculum called 'Arts to the Core, which is characterized as standards-based curriculum aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

WEDJ PCS is committed to providing a rigorous curriculum and instructional program that is embedded in exceptional practices of teaching and learning. Students master Essential Skills and knowledge in English Language Arts and Mathematics, understandings necessary for high school and college preparation.

Students applied these essential skills and understandings through project-based work that was completely aligned with CCSS. This research-based approach to teaching and learning engaged student interest and led to increased standardized test scores in mathematics over the course of the 2012-2013 school year.

The new customized Arts to the Core Curriculum draws on a range of resources. The distinctive WEDJ academic program is primarily informed by the CCSS and the DC curriculum as outlined by OSSE. The WEDJ curriculum is also grounded in educational research published by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the Association for Curriculum, Supervision and Development (ASCD), the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE), The National Council for the Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), Harvard Project Zero, as well as commercial materials published by McGraw-Hill and other commercial publications. Direction was also provided by the non-profit organization, Achievement Network (ANET).

The strength of the academic program was enhanced by:

1. Curriculum aligned vertically with CCSS Expectations
2. Increasing Instructional Time and Lowered T:S Ratio
3. Academic Supports
4. 'Artists in Residence' and other Innovative Programs
5. Targeted Staff Development
6. Establishment of a Culture of Respect
7. The passion and commitment of the Support Staff

1. Curriculum Aligned Vertically with CCSS Expectations

The DC state standards, in addition to the publication of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), provided guidelines for school, but with the large volume of expectations and repeated items between each grade, it was easy for teachers to select randomly from the lists and therefore, not equip students with what would be considered "essential" for each grade. For instance, a 3rd grade math class might be taught more difficult concepts than a 5th grade class simply because it was up to the teacher to self-select what s/he thought might be most valuable. As a result the school lacked a curriculum compass. The reliance on *America's Choice* or textbook/program series as the exclusive source for improving academic achievement has not proven to enhance test scores over the past three years.

At WEDJ we identified 10 -12 "Essential Skills and Understandings" for each grade level that function as key benchmarks for instruction and assessment. All teachers submitted WEDJ Pacing Guides aligned with these rigorous goals. Curriculum materials and/or textbooks were used as resources, putting the responsibility for learning back in the

teacher and students' hands. No longer can one program be relied on or assumed to be all that students need to succeed.

The focus of the Essential Skills is to shift what happens in school from what is taught to what is learned. Students learn in different ways and at different paces. What is critically important is that they learn. Rather than teach 150 lessons of which a small portion of students would master, it is best to teach fewer, more difficult units of study, to ensure that concepts stick. In this way there is time for re-teaching and more importantly teaching to the learning style of each student, so they all can master the concept and feel confident about moving forward. The volume of material from grade to grade, that is presented in textbooks, is impossible for all students to reach mastery. It is also highly repetitious from grade to grade as well. No longer should curriculum be a random, leaving students behind because so much has to be "covered". We now use a very deliberate program for intense instruction so that difficult concepts have time to be mastered and stick long after a standardized test.

2. Increasing Instructional Time and Lowered T: S Ratio

To change the state of the poor 2011-2012 math results, the amount of time for math was increased in the Grades 2 to 8 schedule from 60 minutes daily to the following:

Grade	Average daily time for Math Instruction per day	
	2011-2012	2012-2013
Grade 2	60 minutes/day	85 minutes
Grade 3		120 minutes
Grade 4		100 minutes
Grade 5		125 minutes
Grade 6		80 minutes
Grade 7		75 minutes
Grade 8		90 minutes

The times were also adjusted for most grades and increased for ELA:

Grade	Average daily time for ELA Instruction per day	
	2011-2012	2012-2013
Grade 2	90 minutes/day for Grades 2 and 60 minutes per day for grades 3 to 8	90 minutes
Grade 3		102 minutes
Grade 4		96 minutes
Grade 5		78 minutes
Grade 6		95 minutes
Grade 7		80 minutes
Grade 8		80 minutes

During the two months prior to the DC-CAS testing, student time for Math and ELA increased to 120 minutes per day. The first hour the students were taught by their regular math or ELA teacher, but the second hour they took part in small group instruction offered by SPED teachers, Teaching Assistants and Administration, in what was called "profile" groupings. Students were able to access immediate support feedback and share instruction with 7-8 other students.

3. Academic Supports

WEDJ was fortunate to gain from the internal and external supports throughout the course of the school year. The Dean of Special Education set expectations for SPED staff to communicate appropriate information from student IEPs to teacher to increase effectiveness for meeting the needs of all students in his or her class. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are primarily maintained and documented by the Dean of Special Education. 18 students (including 504 Plan students) received accommodations during the 2012-2013 school year. Not all of our special education students get accommodations for DCCAS. It all depends on what is listed in their IEP and what grade they are in. All members of the Administration teach a minimum of ten hours/week to support student learning. We also had two volunteers from the community, one notably Alan Ginsburg, a key writer of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics.

4. Artists in Residence' and other innovative programs

Students who learn to talk with and like experts learn much more than people who listen to or are distant from experts. Artists in residence allow for powerful relationships to be nurtured and sustained. It is fortunate for our students to be amongst such giants and benefit from the expertise of the National Philharmonic and the Shakespearean Theater Company.

- Arts experts for students in PK to grade 8
- 'Everyday Strings' for K-2 (featuring National Philharmonic guest teachers)
- Integrated (ELA & Drama) Theatre in PK through grade 5 (with WEDJ staff and Shakespeare Theatre Company guest teachers)
- Arts Specialization in grades 6-8 (daily programming in dance, music, theatre or visual arts)
- Students had a chance to view international performers from Afghanistan as well as many local arts professionals

The establishment of additional 'best practices' were introduced to improve scores indirectly:

- Promoting Arts & Leadership (PAL) Program (school wide course – 30 min. in PK-2 and 60 minutes 3-8 that teaches about studying, test taking and forming strong learning and character habits)
- Research & Technology course introduced at grades 6-8 to deliberately teach inquiry skills and demonstrate quality STEM programming.
- Students taught by specialists in science and social studies from grades 3 to 8
- Grade 6,7 and 8 students writing novels
- Library Instruction
- Technology instruction (Grade 6 – PowerPoint; Grade 7 – video production; Grade 8 – web design)
- Addition of weekly chess instruction by Chess Masters for students in 3rd to 8th grade.
- Weekly peer teaching course taught by the principal to Grade 7 students (research is clear - students who learn to think and talk like teachers increase their learning capacity)

5. Targeted Staff Development (2012-2013)

In addition to investing in the ANET standardized testing and support program that has a strong reputation for wide-scale success in improved standardized testing scores, the school is preparing

- Specific PD and performance review for TA's and substitute teachers
- "Team teaching" programs where master teachers in math and ELA support programming (with weekly planning time for weekly teaching time together)
- Dr. Michael Thompson (boys and learning expert from Boston) and David Booth (Literacy excerpt from Toronto) presented thought-provoking PD at WEDJ
- 11 teachers will be headed to Harvard's Project Zero PD summer 2013.

6. Establishment a Culture of Respect

- Initiation of the WEDJ Commitment - an agreement for how we (students, staff and parents) operate in a positive and supportive manner. Minimizing discipline problems will increase time on task.
- A culture of professionalism (encouraging teachers to do graduate programming, apply for National Board certification, present/organize conference) – basically model leadership in the profession, so students and families can see that we do more than what's expected so our students will raise the bar also
- Regular Teacher Observation, Feedback and Support
- Rigorous Teacher Recruitment Practices - Potential staff members are interviewed throughout the school year to ensure that we have a solid active file. Current staff members that demonstrated strength and potential were informed in May 2013 of the school's intention to offer them positions for the next school year.
- The passion and commitment of the Support Staff - The office, security, maintenance staff and the administration play a part in supporting academics at the school; their roles should never be under-stated.

Parent Involvement Efforts

Recognizing parents are key to student success, we reached out to parents in a variety of ways.

1. **Staff participation in PTA** (mandatory to come to at least 3 meetings/year)
2. **Co-hosted events with PTA** (Valentines Party, Car Wash, Family Week, focus group meetings as well as bringing in in guest speakers).
3. Highly promoted **Parent-Teacher Conferences** (53%, 71%, 73%) turnout to the November, January and March interview dates (arts performances and the school science fair was included in the program, so parents could see evidence of student learning.
4. **Parent Education Workshops** in consultation with the PTA - We had good intentions to have many parent workshops. We hosted Michael Thompson (boys and learning) and David Booth (Literacy), but only a few parents turned out. Finding ways to reach the parent population is an important goal
5. Our VP, School Culture, took part in **home visits** when students had attendance issues.

We applied for a Flamboyant Foundation Grant because we wanted to expand the reach for more teachers to take part in home visits. We did not receive the grant, but will go ahead with plans to promote and engage teachers in home visits.

II. School Performance

A. Evidence of Performance and Progress

The 2012-2013 school year targeted many ambitious goals on several fronts:

1. The hiring of highly qualified, committed and capable staff.
2. The generation of a world class arts program
3. Increasing significantly standardized test scores on DC-CAS
4. Working at becoming a DCPCS Tier 1 School based on the Performance Management Framework (PMF)

Are we meeting expectations? The WEDJ School is meeting the goals of the mission in varying degrees.

1. The **curriculum, now aligned**, provides solid direction for staff to develop lessons that fulfill the CCSS expectations. The development of the WEDJ scope and sequence for math and ELA took over a year of professional conversations and response to student work – to develop the current guide. The expectations are also written so that lay people can understand expectations, increasing the transparency of what has to be learned. The expectations have also been integrated into the new report card with positive reviews from over 100 parents.
2. **Assessment** data informs teaching by helping teachers see exactly what they need to re-teach. Classroom assessment happens outside a standardized testing setting. The Administrative team and mentors need to support teachers in the development of hands on resources to collect daily feedback about student progress.
3. **Lack of Differentiation and Re-Teaching Activity** - It is not enough, however, to have elaborate lists of skills and think we have fixed the problem; the staff need to become more adept at developing more differentiated practices and they must also document the gains of students in daily classroom learning. Based on the lack of basics mastered in ELA (ie. students inability to identify adjectives in grade 3), it appears that some teachers are not developing intensive units to ensure mastery; the steps of re-teaching are rushed. More monitoring is needed to make sure all teaching staff are differentiating and spending concentrated time with multiple re-teaching built into their program to ensure that the essential skills are mastered.
4. **Coordinated System for Accessing, Sharing and Acting on Data** - Students are tested twice a year in the primary grades using **PALS testing** criteria that is closely aligned with the CCSS. In the 2011-2012 school year PALS Assessment was completed by each PreK teacher – and the records were kept by some, but not all.

The data was not stored in a central location and school officials were unable to locate what was needed for the review day (July 18, 2012). The people responsible for the data could not retrieve it when officials from OSSE arrived to report on our Early Childhood Learning data. It seems that some data was discarded when summer programs took over classrooms. There was no process for housing data in a safe or duplicate location. Attempts were made by the former administrator to locate files with summary data – but the data was incomplete. There were no reports that emerged from an analysis of this data. Three teachers of the six were able to produce their raw testing data. Attendance data was also corrupted, in part due to complications associated with combining schools after the earthquake. At this time lack of communication hampered families' capacities to know if school was continuing. Some families from the Northwest area chose to find alternative schools. As a result of the inability to produce the testing records, and the official attendance records at the time of the school visit, the Final Report for the Early Childhood Accountability Plan 2011-2012 indicates that William E. Doar, Jr. PCS met 0 out of the 4 targets.

Student Progress Targets
75% of pre kindergarten-3 and pre-kindergarten-4 students will increase by 7 letter identifications or master at least 21 by the spring administration on the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) assessment.
70% of kindergarten through second-grade students will demonstrate growth by increasing 3 reading levels (5 for 1st) by the spring administration on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA).
Student Achievement Targets
70% of first and second-grade students will read on or above grade level on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)
Leading Indicator Targets
On average, kindergarten through second-grade students will attend school 92% of the days.

*Data not available at the time of review

Targets Met: 0 Targets Missed: 4

B. Lessons Learned

Targets need to be set based on the review of the benchmark data from both the new students and the returning students to the school at the beginning of the school year. To reach ambitious targets several measures have been put into place: curriculum alignment; the targeting of more rigorous essential skills in Pre-K to grade 8 and the establishment of a systematic means for collecting data, backing up data and analyzing data. Preparations for review days must have all data necessary for the review. The Vice Principal, Academics, or Testing Coordinator, now oversees the collection of data, the examination of data and the response to data. The principal, or designate, will ensure that data leads to action, that is, it is not merely collected – but the results lead to revision of teaching and learning practices.

1. Documenting Meaningful Benchmark Data

The use of Scantron testing in the past (prior to 2012-2013 school year) did not yield reliable data throughout the year. No reports analyzing the data were recorded, nor were the minutes of data discussions taken or shared for future use...WEDJ invested in ANET, a resource with support people who come with a strong track record of success in DC and

other national schools. Their turn around time for providing testing results is ideal (48 hours). They support teachers to learn how to examine data and act on it. In this way re-teaching can be very targeted to meet students' individual needs. The ANET testing process also involves pencil and paper work, so student work can be examined to determine the cause of misconceptions or whether or not they were guessing. Students engage in ANET testing four times in a year targeting different groups of expectations each time, giving teachers some pacing directions and support, so that what is tested is aligned with what is taught.

The four ANET tests helped teachers organize their plans for re-teaching. In addition WEDJ developed our own benchmark tests to gather more precise information about students partially learned. We also piloted smaller 'profile' classes where teachers and students indicated that these provided much better learning opportunities. On the DC-CAS, students improved in Math, but not in ELA.

The DCCAS test results, a valued quantitative metric, are used as benchmarks to measure academic achievement at the school and comparatively, across the district. The trend for students demonstrating proficiency has been declining for several years. The results of for the 2011-2012 school year indicate that only approximately 42% of the school population was proficient in reading and math. The math results were specifically, deficient.

- 50% of the school was proficient at reading.
- 36.1% was proficient at math.

The delta in ANET Scores revealed that prior to the 2013 DC-CAS students had improved by:

**Close to 10 % in math (from 36 to 44%),
but the school was down 4% in reading. (From 50 to 47%)**

WEDJ will work with the data from benchmark testing and with our ANET consultant to support a continued increase in math scores as well as find out better ways to improve ELA test scores.

1. Monitoring Staff

After a year, there was significant growth in math. In some cases, the focus on what ANET was testing directed the curriculum choices in math and ELA, rather than the pacing guides. It was not clear that all teachers were developing their own rigorous lesson plans in alignment with our Essential Skills from the Common Core; many were printing off materials from the internet that did may have addressed skills and understandings from other grades. A focus on developing lessons based on 'exit tickets' that align with the essential skills will enable math and ELA teachers to target their focus on the WEDJ curriculum compass.

The criteria that ground the WEDJ Red Carpet assessment tools (Charlotte Danielson's

work) are sound, and the implementation must continue to be strategic, systematic and accountable. The principal met with each teacher in August 2012 and gathered specific goals to focus on during three observations in the course of the 2012-2013 school year. Selected teacher leaders took part in an Administrative Practicum led by the principal. These mentors worked with a small group of teachers to plan, team-teach and provide at least two documented observations throughout the year. The principal conducted observations with each mentor teacher on two occasions and they observed their teachers twice during the course of the school year. The principal assessed every teacher once during the school year.

Ideally, the same mentor teachers would work with the same teachers. This year, due to changes in staffing, there were changes in mentoring partners. Next year the plan is to have a consistent mentor teacher throughout so teacher improvement can be evident from the beginning of the year compared to the end of the year.

The monitoring of the teaching was somewhat of a challenge. For the 2013-2014 school year, the mentor planning will happen with the mentor teacher working with a grade team to address lessons that align with the essential skills. Teachers will also be asked to use 'exit tickets' developed by the ELA and Math Coordinators that also align with the ES. Teachers will be expected to have daily lesson plans that lead to the exit tickets. The data from all the exit tickets in mathematics will be monitored and analysis will inform future curriculum revisions. The teaching staff are expected to provide their mentors or administrators copies of their lesson plans for review weekly throughout the school year. Such plans would need to address IDEA:

- **I = Individual Assessment tool in the form of in-class assessment and exit ticket assessment.**
- **D = Differentiation**
- **E = Essential skills focus**
- **A = Accommodations/modifications for students on IEP's**

Based on these results, a continuous sense of urgency surrounding the preparation for standardized testing was advised to keep scores moving in a positive direction.